

Lake County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Daniel A. Dunlap

2011 Annual Report - WITTS Program



LAKE COUNTY ADULT DETENTION FACILITY Overview of the Women In Transition Through Support Program Annual Report for 2011 Lt. Cynthia Brooks

Mission Statement

Our mission is to assist women in reuniting with a positive and healthy environment that minimizes the circumstances that lead to their repeated incarceration. Our focus is to increase their employment skills, develop positive relationship values and support, elevate their educational level, build self-esteem, control choices through anger management, build strength through drug and alcohol treatment, as well as developing strong family structures.



Goals

Our goal is to reintegrate women and inspire them to be positive and productive citizens that will decrease the potential for repeated incarceration.

Discussion

The Criminal Justice system's perspectives of female offender's perceive them as a part of a fundamental portion of the sociological and political part of the community due to their growth in population in jails and prisons. The nuclei of women's issues fail to see their role in society as partners and mothers.

Women offenders are victims of sexual, physical and psychological abuse and have different needs than those of men. Women are also more likely to have mental illness and be addicted to drugs. Therapists, criminologist, practitioners and others need to develop programs that cater to the needs of women in order to alter their continuing errant behavior. The programs adopted for intervention of their unruly behavior should fit the individual needs for each woman and meet the safety needs of the community.

Research has made clear that punishment-driven approaches alone are not effective in reducing recidivism or preventing future crime. To encourage successful offender reentry and prevent future crime, corrections professionals must address the reasons why offenders become involved in the criminal justice system. Without effective intervention, offenders will leave incarceration facing those same challenges and without the tools necessary to overcome them.

Common obstacles to offenders' success include:

- **Education Barriers-** More than one-third of offenders in prison have not earned a high school diploma or GED and 4 out of 5 have not received any postsecondary education. While most prisons offer educational classes (e.g., Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education), only a portion of inmates receive these services. In fact, between 2000 and 2005, the number of prisons offering these services decreased.
- **Employment Barriers-** Furthermore, the lack of job skills, the deterioration of skills while incarcerated (1/3 of offenders receive vocational training while they are incarcerated), intermittent work histories, and the stigma of being in prison make finding legitimate and well-paying employment in the community difficult.
- **Substance Abuse and Addiction-** Fifty-three percent (53%) of male state prisoners and 60% of female state prisoners meet the DSM-IV drug dependence or abuse criteria. This is four times the rate of addiction experienced by the general population. Yet only about one in every ten offenders participates in substance abuse programming prior to release.
- **Mental Health Concerns-** Mental health problems affect the majority of both male (55%) and female (73%) adults in prison. Women offenders often suffer from depression, anxiety disorders (e.g., PTSD), and eating disorders, while substance abuse and antisocial personality disorders are more prevalent among men.
- **Homelessness-** For offenders who may have been homeless prior to incarceration and struggle to find sustainable, affordable housing after release, fewer than ten percent will have the opportunity to live in a halfway house or other community release center.
- **Caring for Children-** For the majority of offenders (55%) who have dependent children, reentry brings an increased responsibility for the physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing of others.
- **Other Survival Concerns-** For offenders who are released from prison without the necessary identification (e.g., birth certificate, state issued identification) and transportation options (e.g., personal vehicle, a residence near public bus routes), obtaining appropriate housing, employment, and services can be quite challenging if not impossible. (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2010).

When the reentry process is successful there are benefits for the community in terms of improved public safety. Correctional and criminal justice costs are reduced in the long run as offenders are directed away from reoffending to more productive work and civic contributions. Successful reentry is important not only to the futures of offenders and their families, but also to the well being and quality of life of families and neighborhoods throughout Ohio.

WITTS is a neighborhood example of a program that attempts to make Ohio a safer place for all. WITTS continues to strive toward the goal of reuniting women with a positive environment that minimizes the circumstances that lead to their repeated incarceration. Our goal is to instill a sense of hope and empowerment for incarcerated women so that they will be better prepared to reenter society and into the lives of their families.

Grant Information

WITTS was awarded a 2011 Justice Assistance Grant by the Office of Criminal Justice Services in the amount of \$29,441.00. Neighboring will provide the cash match in the amount of \$9,814.00 for a project total of \$39,225.04 for 2012. This will mark the 8th consecutive year that WITTS has received this award!

Highlights !!!!!

Jail Groups

Creative Writing, Vision Boarding, and Self-Esteem groups were added to the line-up of established programs (parenting, peer support, domestic violence, & yoga) offered to the women.

Creative writing is held twice a month and focuses on encouraging the women to use creativity to explore thoughtful self-expression. Varieties of writing forms are used, such as, poetry, short stories, and letter writing, to promote inspired discussion.

Vision boarding is a monthly workshop that encourages the women to identify and strive towards their goals. The women make a collage of words and pictures (cut out from magazines) that convey personal goals and what they value in their lives.

The self-esteem group focuses on self-discovery. The curriculum conveys to the women how important it is to love oneself first so they can fully love others. The women completed various self-worth exercises and learned how self-image plays a role in one's life.

Employment group received such positive feedback from the participants, it is now offered on a weekly basis. Two employment specialists from Neighboring lend their expertise as co-facilitators for the employment group. The group concentrates on getting the women to realize the skills they have to offer as an individual instead of an offender. Topics discussed include barriers to employment, the significance of attitude, interview practice, resume preparation, resources and a letter of explanation.

The yoga program is provided by a team of certified yoga instructors who take turns teaching as volunteers each Thursday. Students are provided with yoga mats and yoga blocks to use for the practice. Students are instructed in yoga postures, relaxation, meditation and breathing. The women report being very grateful for the program as it teaches them to cope with jail life by learning relaxing techniques. Recently, one of the women expressed to one of the instructors that yoga is what helped her make it through her period of incarceration. So of the women have said they plan to continue with the practice of yoga upon their release. Books about the practice of yoga were donated by several of the teachers in the year 2011 for use by the women, since they have expressed an interest in learning more about yoga. The yoga teachers also report teaching yoga at the jail as being a very rewarding experience for them because the women are so appreciative.

The **“Victim’s”** Of Domestic Violence class is held on Tuesday afternoon. The session basically focuses on being a “Victim” and learning how to cope.

The “**Parenting Class**” aides in assisting women with dealing with their children from a new born to adulthood. The group focuses on setting children up for success as well as trying to become a better parent.

Catholic Charities through the “**Families of Promise**” program is designed to support families with incarcerated loved ones. The program helps the non-incarcerated parent to assume the leadership role in the family and help him or her deal with the immediate issues of housing, finances, employment, and the safety and well-being of children.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars aka Uniquely Me

The objectives of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program plans to achieve are:

- Develop skills among incarcerated mothers in conflict resolution and parenting
- Preserve and affirm relationships between incarcerated mothers and their daughters
- Encourage girls' social and personal development
- Provide meaningful leadership opportunities to the girls and their mothers

The expected outcome for this project is to serve 20 girls from Lake County and their mothers. Currently, we have contacted 16 families.

The “Uniquely Me”, self-esteem program is savvy and exciting and doesn't expose girls' secret about having an incarcerated parent. We opened the program up to girls who had an incarcerated parent, not just a mother but also fathers.

GSNEO Program Director and Program Specialist re-established the relationship with Families of Promise and developed a referral process. The GSNEO have adapted a more aggressive campaign with schools and community organizations to recruit by working with teachers and counselors.

In the past year the girls have:

- Wednesday, Jan.- Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Wednesday, Feb 8th- Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Wednesday, March 30th- Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Saturday, April 2nd-Cookie Booth 10:00am-12:00pm-(Key Bank on Erie)
- Wednesday, April 6th-Field Trip IX Center
- Wednesday, April 27- Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Wednesday, May 4th-Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Wednesday, May 18th-Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm
- Friday, May 20-Sunday May 22nd-Cadette Summit at Camp Ledgewood
- Wednesday, June 22nd-Meeting
- Wednesday, August 17th-Back to School Bash
- Wednesday, September 28th-Meeting
- Sunday, October 17th-Disney on Ice
- Wednesday, November 16th- Meeting 4:00pm-5:00pm –**Operation** Christmas Child which partners with churches worldwide to deliver shoe-boxes filled with gifts to children less fortunate.

- Saturday, December 3rd-Field Trip Girls Health Summit-Cleveland State
- Holiday Outing/Caroling-December 21st

GSNEO received a \$27,000 Grant from the Lake Geauga Fund for 2 years in 2010. GSNEO will have to re-apply for the grant in March of 2012. The money is used to provide transportation, bus tickets, program materials and uniforms, and expenses to offer the girls a leadership experience.

Moving forward there are plans to strengthen community relationships by, connecting with local churches and having more conversations or forums with other organizations and community leaders. Deanna Jarvis from GSNEO facilitates this program. We are looking forward to reaching our goal 2012's Girl Scout adventures.

Aftercare

In 2011 WITTS Aftercare held two-twelve week sessions. Six women successfully completed. Participant referrals came from Common Pleas Adult Probation, Mentor Municipal Court, Painesville Municipal Court, and Neighboring mental health services. The aftercare group served as a safe, supportive environment for women returning to the community after a period of incarceration.

Group members offer peer support for each other as well as positive reinforcement. The women also had the opportunity to practice essential life skills such as; stress management, building healthy relationships, coping skills, boundaries, anger management, budgeting, and setting goals.

WITTS Aftercare will continue to be offered in 2012. The group is held on Wednesday mornings from 10:00am-12:00pm at Western Reserve Counseling in Victoria Place. Please contact the Reentry Coordinator, Kristy Giza Mowry, at 440-639-3549 with any questions.

Partnership

WITTS continues to build partnerships with other agencies. We reached out to Women's Re-Entry Network (WREN) in Cleveland in 2010 to establish a connection for women returning to Cuyahoga County. Over the last several years, there has been an increase in the number of female inmates in the Lake County Jail returning to live in Cuyahoga County upon release. To improve the woman's reintegration in their community, the two reentry programs worked together to create a referral process for out of county inmates. The referral system was implemented in June and five women have been referred to WREN, while three women have been referred to WITTS. This collaborative effort ensures that the women will be better linked to appropriate services.

Reentry Coordinator

Maureen Leitch left Neighboring in November 2011 to pursue other endeavors. She was the WITTS coordinator for five years. The WITTS program and all of the volunteers, and Jail Staff wish her the best. She has been replaced by Kristy Giza-Mowry.

Kristy is a Licensed Social Worker for the State of Ohio. Kristy experiences include working at Coache's Corner, Hannah's House, Lake County Boys Group Home, and Crossroads. Kristy has a M.A in Criminal Justice and a B.A. in Psychology & Sociology. She looks forward to bringing her talent and experience to work with the female inmates of Lake County and she is very excited about her new position. We welcome Kristy!!

Number of women the Reentry Coordinator worked with individually in 2011:

Total of 88 in 2011 and 81 in 2010

- 64 in 2011 Lake County women compared to 56 in 2010
- 24 in 2011 Out of county compared to 23 in 2010
- 16 in 2011 Cuyahoga County compared to 15 in 2010
- 2 in 2010 Ashtabula County compared to 6 in 2010
- 0 in 2011 Geauga County compared to 2 in 2010
- WITTS assisted 2 women from Warren (Trumbull County)
- 1 from Montgomery County
- 3 were from out of state (New York California and Montana)
- 4 women reported being homeless at the time of incarceration.

By The Numbers!

WITTS assisted a total of 164 women from Lake County and 114 women from outside of Lake County.

The average daily population of females increased was 57.3 in 2010 compared to 58.9 in 2011. The latter part of 2011 saw a large increase of females with daily averages for Oct, Nov, and Dec to well over 60 per day with highest being over 80 per day and it is still close to that number in 2012 per day.

- 10 % of females had crimes of violence last year. (Up from 3 % the year before)
- 59 % of the participants are in county (Steady but gradual increase over the last 4 years)
- 33 % of the charges are related to probation and fulfilling demands of the court
- 28 % of the charges are drug/alcohol related
- 21 % of the charges are theft related
- Average age and sentence are consistent with last year (age = 33 / sentence = 49 days)

Some interesting statistics of the WITTS participants in 2011:

- 54% were unemployed at the time of incarceration in 2011 compared to 74% in 2010
- 78% report some form of substance abuse compared to 89% in 2010
- 43% were involved with mental health in 2011 compared to 57 % in 2010
- 39% report having minor children in 2011 compared to 54% in 2010

- 75% of the women with children do not have custody of their children in 2011 compared to 90 % in 2010

While these stats may sound startling, this is a local snapshot of what is happening across the country. Women offenders typically have low incomes and are undereducated and unskilled. They have sporadic employment histories and are disproportionately women of color. They are less likely than men to have committed violent offenses and more likely to have been convicted of crimes involving drugs or property. Often, their property offenses are economically driven, motivated by poverty and by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs (U.S. Dept of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, 2005).



We intend to continue to create a network of agencies and businesses designed to meet the needs of each individual. This network of professionals will assist these female offenders during incarceration by providing treatment and counseling services to help effect a positive change in their lives. Upon release these services will continue by tracking and maintaining communication and assistance with the program participants so that their continued rehabilitation and success will be better enabled to be achieved.

Contributing Networking Agencies:

Neighboring
 Extended Housing
 Women's Center Lakeland Community College
 Job and Family Services
 Victims Assistance Program
 Forbes House
 Atma Center
 Ohio State University Extension
 Girl Scouts of North East Ohio
 Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority
 Catholic Charities Families of Promise

Sofa

The time that I wasted is my biggest regret. Spent in these places I'll never forget. Just sitting & thinking about the things that I've done, the crying, the laughing, the hurt and the fun. Now it's just me and my hard earned guilt, behind the wall of emptiness I allowed to be built. I'm trapped in my body just waiting to run back to my youth with its laughter and fun. But the chase is over there is no place to hide, Everything is gone including my pride. With reality suddenly right in my face, I'm scared, alone and stuck in this place. Memories of the past flash through my head, the pain is obvious by the tears that I shed. I ask myself "why" and "where" I went wrong. I guess I was weak when I should of been strong. Running for the drugs on the wings I have grown, My feelings were lost afraid to be shown. As I look at my past it's so easy to see, the fear that I had... afraid to be me. I would pretend to be rugged, so fast and so cool, when actually lost like a blind folded fox. I'm getting to old for this tiresome game, of acting real hard with no sense of shame. It is time that I change and get on with my life, fulfilling the dreams that I pray for each night. What my future will hold I really don't know, The years that I've wasted are starting to show. I must live each day with its new start, loving myself with all of my heart. I know I can make it as long as I try. Because I was headed for death and...
I don't want to Die

